

REMARKS

Claims 1-11 remain pending in this application.

Rejection of claims 1-3, 6-7 and 11 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a)

Claim 1-3, 6-7 and 11 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Rumreich (U.S. Patent No. 5,995,160) in view of Ford (U.S. Patent No. 6,181,364 B1).

The present claimed invention provides a method and apparatus for program signal blocking. A program signal associated with one of a plurality of signal channels is received at a signal input. The signal input selects one of the plurality of signal channels in response to a user input. A signal output provides an output signal derived from the program signal. An auxiliary data decoder detects program related information included in each program signal. A processor is operatively connected to the signal input, the signal output and the auxiliary data decoder. The processor is responsive to user selection of a first operating mode for controlling the output signal in a predetermined manner to reduce user access to the output signal for at least until the program related information is detected upon user selection of a new one of the plurality of signal channels. User selection of a second operating mode provides user access to the output signals prior to detection of the program related information. Independent claims 1 and 11 include limitations similar to those discussed above.

Rumreich describes a video signal processing system for blanking main and auxiliary images in a multi-image display, e.g., a PIP or POP display, independently. This system blanks the image signal in response to auxiliary image data included in the video signal, the auxiliary image data indicating content of the programming. The blanking may be part of a V-chip feature in which blanking occurs in response to auxiliary information, such as XDS data that is included in a video signal to indicate the content of television programming. Main image blanking occurs only during active video intervals to prevent corrupting sync information. In a system that produces the main image from various types

of video signals, e.g., composite video and s-video, that require separate signal processing paths, main image blanking capability is provided in one signal path only, such as the composite video path. The blanking capability is activated and the associated signal path is selected to provide main picture blanking regardless of which type of signal is providing the main picture.

Rumreich is concerned with blanking either or both a main and auxiliary image independently of one another. However, this system is not concerned with the delay time required for a television receiver to receive and decode the program related information included in the auxiliary image data. As discussed in column 5, lines 31-40, the central processing unit, upon receipt of a command provided by a user, sends a change channel command along with channel data to the tuner which tunes the next channel. Column 6, lines 18-50 disclose a system whereby the programming information is received and then is compared to a "user-selected rating limit." Only after the comparison, if the content exceeds the user-selected rating limit, is the displayed image modified, such as by blanking the image. Thus, Rumreich neither discloses nor suggests "a first operating mode for controlling said output signal in a predetermined manner to reduce access to said output signal for at least until said program related information is detected upon user selection of a new one of said plurality of signal channels" as claimed in claim 1 and similarly in claim 11 of the present invention.

Ford describes a system for filtering out potentially objectionable content from a video. Videos are filtered by using the embedded information that identifies potentially objectionable events. The system determines which substitution events are to be filtered out based on selectable ratings settings. If desired, filtered video images may be replaced with blank video images and filtered audio signals may be replaced with silence or a tone. Filtering may also involve making substitutions of audio or video information. Audio information in a substitution event may be replaced by appropriate audio segments. Video information in a substitution event may be replaced by a video still or by a video clip.

Ford is concerned with filtering out objectionable events during a television program or movie, such as vulgar language or sexual or violent graphics. Objectionable

video images and audio clips are temporarily replaced with non-offensive substitute images and audio segments. The Office Action contends that Ford teaches the use of a default blocking mode for automatically blanking of undesirable or unsuitable contents without the need for detection of ratings codes. Applicant respectfully disagrees. The default action described in column 4, lines 23-31, of Ford refers to the action taken when a substitution event is detected. In certain low-end embodiments, the default action is to blank and mute the screen when objectionable material is detected. In higher-end embodiments, however, each substitution event code in the substitution event table has a corresponding entry (substitution attribute). The substitution attribute specifies a more complex type of action to be taken when a substitution event is detected. Unlike the present claimed invention, Ford only acts on the detection of a substitution event. Ford is not concerned with blocking out material until program related information (a substitution event) is detected. Ford, thus, neither discloses nor suggests "a first operating mode for controlling said output signal in a predetermined manner to reduce access to said output signal for at least until said program related information is detected upon user selection of a new one of said plurality of signal channels" as in the present claimed invention.

Furthermore, combining the systems of Rumreich, and Ford as indicated by the Office Action would result in a video signal processing system capable blanking main and auxiliary images in a multi-image display while providing temporarily audio and video replacement clips when substitution events are detected. Such a system neither discloses nor suggests the features of the present claimed invention. Additionally, the purpose of Rumreich is to blank main and auxiliary images in a multi-image display while the objective of Ford is to temporarily filter out potentially objectionable content from a video. In contrast, the present claimed invention addresses the problem of displaying objectionable content during the delay time required for a television receiver to receive and decode program related information included with the program signal. The present claimed invention does so by reducing access to the output signal for at least until said program related information is detected upon user selection of a new one of the plurality of signal channels. Rumreich and Ford neither disclose nor suggest "reduce[ing] user access to said output signal for at least until said program related information is detected upon user selection of a new one of said plurality of signal channels" as in the present claimed

invention. Reducing user access in each of Rumreich and Ford is dependent upon receipt of a V-block indication or detection of a substitution event. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that Rumreich and Ford, when taken alone or in combination, do not make the present claimed invention unpatentable. Thus, the withdrawal of the rejection of claims 1 and 11 under 35 USC 103(a) is respectfully requested.

Applicant further respectfully submits that claims 2-3 and 6-7 are dependent on independent claim 1. Therefore the arguments presented above regarding claim 1 are applicable to dependent claims 2-3 and 6-7. It is thus respectfully submitted that this rejection has been satisfied and should be withdrawn.

Rejection of claims 4-5 and 8-10 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a)

Claim 4-5 and 8-10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Rumreich (U.S. Patent No. 5,995,160) and Ford (U.S. Patent No. 6,181,364 B1) in further view of Collings (U.S. Patent No. 5,828,402).

Collings describes a method and apparatus that blocks the reception of television programming which meets specified criteria. Data packets describing television programming are broadcast with the television signal. These data packets include at least packets which contain category information specifying a level in one or more multi-level categories and/or label information specifying labels applied to the program content of the signal. Data packets in an incoming video signal are detected by a blocking apparatus and compared to preferences stored in non-volatile memory in the blocking apparatus. If the contents of the data packets match or exceed the stored preferences then the video signal is blocked.

Collings is concerned with providing a video blocking system capable of dealing with programs which may be coded according to two or more distinct coding schemes. However, similar to Rumreich and Ford, Collings also does not account for the delay time required for a television receiver to receive and decode the program related information

included in the auxiliary image data. As discussed in column 5, lines 31-40, the central processing unit, upon receipt of a command provided by a user, sends a change channel command along with channel data to the tuner which tunes the next channel. Column 6, lines 18-50 disclose a system whereby the programming information is received and then is compared to a "user-selected rating limit." Only after the comparison, if the content exceeds the user-selected rating limit, is the displayed image modified, such as by blanking the image. Thus, Collings also neither discloses nor suggests "a first operating mode for controlling said output signal in a predetermined manner to reduce access to said output signal for at least until said program related information is detected upon user selection of a new one of said plurality of signal channels" as claimed in claim 1 of the present invention.

When a new channel is selected, the television receiver may take several seconds to detect and decode the new program related information and take appropriate blocking action. Such is the case with Collings. Collings is not concerned with reducing user access to an output prior to receipt of the program related information as in the present claimed invention. Additionally, if the system disclosed by Collings fails to detect any program related information, the program data is continuously displayed thus allowing potentially undesirable images to be viewed. The present claimed invention, on the other hand, acts as a fail-safe method and prevents unauthorized viewing during the comparison time by "reduce[ing] user access to said output for at least until said program related information is detected." Collings is not concerned with the delay time between selection and tuning a new channel and receipt of the program related information data as in the present claimed invention.

Furthermore, combining the systems of Rumreich, Ford and Collings as indicated by the Office Action would result in a video signal processing system capable of dealing with programs which may be coded according to two or more distinct coding schemes and used for providing blanking main and auxiliary images in a multi-image display while providing temporarily audio and video replacement clips when substitution events are detected. Such a system neither discloses nor suggests the features of the present claimed invention. Additionally, the purpose of Rumreich is to blank main and auxiliary images in a multi-image display; the objective of Ford is to temporarily filter out potentially

objectionable content from a video; and the objective of Collings is to provide a video blocking system capable of dealing with programs which may be coded according to two or more distinct coding schemes. In contrast, the present claimed invention addresses the problem of displaying objectionable content during the delay time required for a television receiver to receive and decode program related information included with the program signal. The present claimed invention does so by reducing access to the output signal for at least until said program related information is detected upon user selection of a new one of the plurality of signal channels. Rumreich, Ford and Collings neither disclose nor suggest "reduce[ing] user access to said output signal for at least until said program related information is detected upon user selection of a new one of said plurality of signal channels" as recited in claim 1 of the present invention. As claims 4-5 and 8-10 are dependent on claim 1, the arguments presented above regarding claim 1 are applicable to dependent claims 4-5 and 8-10.

In view of the above remarks and amendments to the claims it is respectfully submitted that Rumreich, Ford and Collings, when taken alone or in combination, provide no 35 USC § 112 compliant enabling disclosure showing the above discussed features. It is respectfully submitted that Rumreich, Ford and Collings, when taken alone or in combination, do not make the present invention unpatentable. Thus, the withdrawal of the rejection of claims 4-5 and 8-10 under 35 USC 103(a) is respectfully requested.

Should the Examiner feel that anything further is necessary to place this application in condition for allowance he is respectfully requested to contact applicants attorney at the telephone number listed below.




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No other fee is believed due. However, if an additional fee is due, please charge the fee to Deposit Account 07-0832.

Respectfully submitted,
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